

INDIANAPOLIS MAYOR'S OFFICE FOURTH YEAR CHARTER REVIEW

CHRISTEL HOUSE ACADEMY

October 4, 2006

The Indianapolis Mayor's Office Fourth Year Charter Review (FYCR) is designed to assess the extent to which a school is meeting the standards for renewal at the mid-point of its charter term. The FYCR Protocol is based on the *Performance Framework*, which is used to determine a school's success relative to a common set of indicators, as well as to school-based goals.

Consistent with the Indianapolis Mayor's Office Performance Framework, the following four core questions and sub-questions are examined to determine a school's success:

1. Is the educational program a success?

- 1.1. Is the school making adequate yearly academic progress, as measured by the Indiana Department of Education's system of accountability?
- 1.2. Are students making substantial and adequate gains over time, as measured using value-added analysis?
- 1.3. Is the school outperforming schools that the students would have been assigned to attend?
- 1.4. Is the school meeting its school-specific educational goals?

2. Is the organization effective and well-run?

- 2.1. Is the school in sound fiscal health?
- 2.2. Are the school's student enrollment, attendance, and retention rates strong?
- 2.3. Is the school's Board active and competent in its oversight?
- 2.4. Is there a high level of parent satisfaction with the school?
- 2.5. Is the school administration strong in its academic and organizational leadership?
- 2.6. Is the school meeting its school-specific organizational and management performance goals?

3. Is the school meeting its operations and access obligations?

- 3.1. Has the school satisfactorily completed all of its organizational structure and governance obligations?
- 3.2. Is the school's physical plant safe and conducive to learning?
- 3.3. Has the school established and implemented a fair and appropriate pupil enrollment process?
- 3.4. Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with special needs?
- 3.5. Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with limited English proficiency?

4. Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?

- 4.1. Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?
- 4.2. Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?
- 4.3. For secondary students, does the school provide sufficient guidance on and support and preparation for post-secondary options?
- 4.4. Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?
- 4.5. Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?
- 4.6. Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?
- 4.7. Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?
- 4.8. Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?

COMPLETION OF THE FOURTH YEAR CHARTER REVIEW

As part of its oversight of charter schools, the Mayor's Office engaged SchoolWorks to conduct site visits of schools in their fourth year of operation. The purpose was to present the school and the Mayor's Office with a professional judgment on conditions and practices at the school, which are best provided through an external perspective. The FYCR site visit used multiple sources of evidence to understand the school's performance. Evidence collection began before the visit with the review of key documents and continued on-site through additional document review, classroom visits and interviews with a number of stakeholders. Findings provided by the site visit team celebrates what the school is doing well and prioritizes its areas for improvement in preparation for renewal. It was the site visit team's task to report on the following pre-identified aspects of the *Performance Framework* and to assist the Mayor's Office in its completion of the FYCR Protocol: Core Question 4 and all of its sub-questions (4.1-4.8), sub-question 2.3 and sub-question 2.5. The Mayor's Office completed responses to Core Question 1 and all of its sub-questions (1.1-1.4), Core Question 3 and all of its sub-questions (3.1-3.5), and sub-questions 2.1, 2.2 and 2.4.

The purpose of the FYCR is to provide the school with a written report that includes a judgment and supporting evidence on various aspects of the school, based on a rubric of indicators¹ developed for each of the four core questions and sub-questions in the *Performance Framework*. The assessment system utilizes the following judgments:

Does not meet standard
Approaching standard
Meets standard
Exceeds standard

Note: In the case of the sub-questions under **Core Question 3** and **Core Question 4** of the *Performance Framework*, there is no rating for *Exceeds standard*. *Meets standard* is the highest possible rating.

¹ Rubric indicators are subject to revision by the Mayor's Office.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

CHRISTEL HOUSE ACADEMY

Core Question 1: Is the educational program a success?	FINDING
1.1. Is the school making adequate yearly academic progress, as measured by the Indiana Department of Education's system of accountability?	Meets Standard
1.2. Are students making substantial and adequate gains over time, as measured using value-added analysis?	Meets Standard
1.3. Is the school outperforming schools that the students would have been assigned to attend?	Not Evaluated¹
1.4. Is the school meeting its school-specific educational goals?	Not Applicable²
Core Question 2: Is the organization effective and well-run?	FINDING
2.1. Is the school in sound fiscal health?	Meets Standard
2.2. Are the school's student enrollment, attendance and retention rates strong?	Approaching Standard
2.3. Is the school's Board active and competent in its oversight?	Meets Standard
2.4. Is there a high level of parent satisfaction with the school?	Meets Standard
2.5. Is the school administration strong in its academic and organizational leadership?	Meets Standard
2.6. Is the school meeting its school-specific organizational and management performance goals?	Not Applicable³
Core Question 3: Is the school meeting its operations and access obligations?	FINDING
3.1. Has the school satisfactorily completed all of its organizational structure and governance obligations?	Meets Standard
3.2. Is the school's physical plant safe and conducive to learning?	Meets Standard
3.3. Has the school established and implemented a fair and appropriate pupil enrollment process?	Meets Standard
3.4. Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with special needs?	Approaching Standard
3.5. Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with limited English proficiency?	Approaching Standard
Core Question 4: Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?	FINDING
4.1. Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?	Meets Standard
4.2. Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?	Meets Standard
4.3. For secondary students, does the school provide sufficient guidance on and support and preparation for post-secondary options?	Not Applicable⁴
4.4. Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?	Meets Standard
4.5. Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?	Meets Standard
4.6. Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?	Meets Standard
4.7. Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?	Meets Standard
4.8. Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?	Meets Standard

¹ The school was not evaluated in comparison to schools students would have attended.

² The school did not have school-specific educational goals that were evaluated for the FYCR.

³ The school did not have school-specific organizational and management performance goals that were evaluated for the FYCR.

⁴ This sub-question is not applicable to the school, because it does not serve secondary students.

FINDINGS, INDICATORS AND EVIDENCE

CHRISTEL HOUSE ACADEMY

Core Question 1: Is the educational program a success?

1.1. Is the school making adequate yearly academic progress (AYP), as measured by the Indiana Department of Education's system of accountability?	
Does not meet standard	School has met AYP in less than half of student subgroups for the last two consecutive years.
Approaching standard	School has met AYP in more than half of student subgroups for one of the last two years.
Meets standard	School has met AYP across all student subgroups for the last two years.
Exceeds standard	School has exceeded the AYP target in all student subgroups in at least one of the last two years.

Meets Standard. Christel House Academy achieved AYP in 2004 and 2005 toward statewide academic goals set by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) on all 13 indicators it evaluated: school-wide attendance; school-wide passing rates on the English and Mathematics ISTEP+ exams; ISTEP+ English and Mathematics passing rates for subgroups of African-American students, White students, and students who qualified for free and reduced price lunch; and ISTEP+ participation rates school-wide and for each of the three subgroups.

Accordingly, the school meets the IDOE's standard for achieving AYP because it met AYP overall in 2004 and 2005.

1.2. Are students making substantial and adequate gains over time, as measured using value-added analysis?	
Does not meet standard	Value-added analysis indicates that less than 50% of tested students made sufficient gains.
Approaching standard	Value-added analysis indicates that 50%-74% of tested students made sufficient gains.
Meets standard	Value-added analysis indicates that more than 75%-89% of tested students made sufficient gains.
Exceeds standard	Value-added analysis indicates that at least 90% of tested students made sufficient gains.

Meets standard. Analysis of data on fall-to-spring gains over three years revealed that an average of 82% of students achieved sufficient gains to reach proficiency over time. This percentage meets the Mayor's standard of at least 75% of students making sufficient gains.

Analysts determined whether the school's students achieved sufficient gains on the Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Progress test to become proficient over time, typically over two years. Analysts projected each student's test scores into the future based on the amount of progress that student made on the test between fall and spring. Analysts then compared that projected score to the score needed to pass Indiana's ISTEP+ exam at that future time. Finally, analysts calculated the average percentage across all grades (second through eighth where applicable), subjects (reading, math, and language) and years (2003-04, 2004-05, and 2005-06). The result was a single percentage, which determines the rating for the school according to the rubric above.

The methodology for determining sufficient gains changed after 2003-04. In 2003-04, analysts determined whether students made sufficient gains to become proficient by the eighth grade. In subsequent years (2004-05 and 2005-06), the Mayor's Office asked analysts to apply a more stringent standard, and determine whether students made sufficient gains to become proficient within two years at most. For example, analysts determined whether a third grade student made sufficient gains to become proficient by the end of fifth grade. Because the 2003-04 method allowed students more time to become proficient, the percentage of students achieving sufficient gains was generally higher in 2003-04 than in subsequent years, although a drop in this percentage in later years does not necessarily indicate a decrease in school performance. A more detailed explanation of the methodology for calculating sufficient gains appears in Supplemental Report #3 of the 2006 Accountability Report on Mayor-Sponsored Schools.

In summary, this school's three year average of 82% places the school in the Meets Standard category in the Mayor's Performance Framework.

Year	Average Sufficient Gain
2003-2004	98.8%
2004-2005	75.5%
2005-2006	72.7%
Multi-Year Average	82%

1.3. Is the school outperforming schools that the students would have been assigned to attend?	
Does not meet standard	School's overall performance in terms of proficiency and/or growth is generally lower than that of the schools the students would otherwise have been assigned to attend in each of the last three years.
Approaching standard	School's overall performance in terms of both proficiency and/or growth is generally lower than that of the schools the students would otherwise have been assigned to attend in two of the last three years.
Meets standard	School's overall performance in terms of both proficiency and/or growth is generally as good as that of the schools the students would otherwise have been assigned to attend.
Exceeds standard	School's performance consistently outpaces that of the schools the students would otherwise have been assigned to attend.

Not Evaluated.

1.4. Is the school meeting its school-specific educational goals?	
Does not meet standard	School has clearly not met its school-specific educational goal.
Approaching standard	School is making good progress toward meeting its school-specific educational goal.
Meets standard	School has clearly met its school-specific educational goal.
Exceeds standard	School has clearly exceeded its school-specific educational goal.

Not applicable. Christel House Academy did not have school-specific educational goals that were evaluated for the fourth year review.

Core Question 2: Is the organization effective and well-run?

2.1. Is the school in sound fiscal health?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents concerns in <u>three or more</u> of the following areas: a) its state financial audits (e.g., presence of "significant findings"); b) its financial staffing and systems; c) its success in achieving a balanced budget over the past three years; d) the adequacy of its projections of revenues and expenses for the next three years; e) its fulfillment of financial reporting requirements under Sections 10 and 17 of the charter agreement.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one or two</u> of the following areas: a) its state financial audits (e.g., presence of "significant findings"); b) its financial staffing and systems; c) its success in achieving a balanced budget over the past three years; d) the adequacy of its projections of revenues and expenses for the next three years; e) its fulfillment of financial reporting requirements under Sections 10 and 17 of the charter agreement.
Meets standard	The school presents significant concerns in no more than <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) its state financial audits (e.g., presence of "significant findings"); b) its financial staffing and systems; c) its success in achieving a balanced budget over the past three years; d) the adequacy of its projections of revenues and expenses for the next three years; e) its fulfillment of financial reporting requirements under Sections 10 and 17 of the charter agreement. In addition, if the school presents significant concerns in one area, it has a credible plan for addressing the concern that has been approved by the Mayor's Office.
Exceeds standard	The school demonstrates satisfactory performance in all of the areas listed in previous levels.

Meets Standard. Christel House Academy has demonstrated strong fiscal health over the first four years of its charter term. The school has been audited by the ISBA twice in the first four years of operation – for the period from July 2002 to June 2003 and from July 2003 to June 2005. Each report included an unqualified opinion from the ISBA for the school's financials. Each of the audit reports outlined several findings related to the school's financial management and accounting systems, none of which were deemed significant. Following each audit, the school demonstrated a willingness to address the findings and improve its financial management systems.

Christel House Academy has established adequate staffing and systems for managing the school's finances. Since it opened, the school has contracted with an outside bookkeeper to establish its accounting system and assist with the school's financial management responsibilities. The school's outside bookkeeper helps the school ensure that it fulfills all of the ISBA's accounting regulations and requirements. The school has identified a staff member who acts as the primary contact for the outside bookkeeper, and communicates regularly with the outside bookkeeper regarding the school's finances.

The arrangement has been successful over the last four years in ensuring the school complies with the ISBA's requirements and that the school's finances have been managed successfully.

Christel House Academy uses two separate systems for budgeting and accounting for actual revenues and expenses. As a result, it has been difficult over the last four years to effectively evaluate the school's success at achieving a balanced budget. The line items on the budget for revenues and expenses do not correspond exactly to the chart of accounts used in the school's accounting system and prescribed by the ISBA. Therefore, any evaluation of the school's budget to actual revenue and expenses is based on estimates rather than an actual report that can be generated from the school's accounting software. This is a clear area for attention for the school. In the 2006-07 school year, the school must ensure that the budget line items for revenues and expenses correspond exactly to the revenue and expense categories in the school's accounting system as prescribed by the ISBA, which would allow for a more detailed analysis of the school's success at achieving a balanced budget.

Christel House Academy has created a budget for the next five years of operation. While the budget includes what appear to be realistic revenue and expense projections based on the first four years of operation, the school needs to revise the five-year budget to correspond with the revenue and expense categories used in the ISBA chart of accounts. These changes would provide more accurate comparisons between the actual revenues and expenses in the first four years of operation and the revenues and expenses budgeted for the next five years.

Over the past four years, Christel House Academy has fulfilled its financial reporting requirements included in its charter. The school has developed a reporting system that allows the school to meet its reporting deadlines in a timely and accurate manner.

By maintaining current levels of financial compliance, and ensuring that budgets and revenue and expense reports utilize identical categories for accurate comparisons in the future, the school will continue to experience strong fiscal health, and will improve its financial outlook and forecasts for the future.

2.2. Are the school's student enrollment, attendance, and retention rates strong?	
Does not meet standard	The school's actual enrollment consistently falls short of target enrollment by <u>10% or more</u> . Student attendance and retention rates are consistently below the school's agreed-upon target rates.
Approaching standard	The school's actual enrollment consistently falls short of target enrollment by <u>1-9%</u> . Student attendance and retention rates are consistently below the school's agreed-upon target rates.
Meets standard	The school is consistently fully enrolled. Student attendance and retention rates are generally at or above the school's agreed-upon target rates.
Exceeds standard	The school is consistently fully enrolled. Student attendance and retention rates consistently exceed the school's agreed-upon target rates.

Approaching Standard. Christel House Academy was nearly fully enrolled during the last two school years, though fell short of its target enrollment in fall 2003. The school's enrollment was significantly below its target enrollment in 2003-04. The school's annual target enrollments are agreed to in the charter. The following table displays the target enrollment compared with the school's official fall enrollment reported to the IDOE. In fall 2003, the school's official enrollment was 40 students (12.3%) below target enrollment. In both fall 2004 and 2005, however, official enrollment at Christel House Academy was closer to the target enrollment, differing by less than five percent.

School Year	Target Enrollment	Fall Enrollment	Percent Below
2003-04	326	286	12.3%
2004-05	346	332	4.0%
2005-06	380	363	4.5%

Source: Fall enrollment reports filed with the IDOE.
Targets are from the school's charter.

Attendance rates at Christel House Academy were consistently below the IDOE's target of 95% over the last three years for which data is available. The average daily attendance at Christel House Academy rose in 2003-04, but dropped again the following year.

School Year	Attendance Rate
2002-03	92.5%
2003-04	94.7%
2004-05	94.9%

Source: IDOE.

No targets have been established for student retention rates for Christel House Academy. Less than half (48.8%) of the first class of 252 students at Christel House Academy in fall 2002 returned to the school in fall 2003. Fall to fall retention rates improved the following two years, to 73.8% between fall 2004 and fall 2005.

Years	Students Enrolled Initial Year	Students Re-enrolled Following Year	Retention Rate
Fall 2002 to Fall 2003	252	123	48.8%
Fall 2003 to Fall 2004	286	184	64.3%
Fall 2004 to Fall 2005	332	245	73.8%

Source: Mayor's Office analysis of official fall enrollment reports filed with the IDOE. Because the official report was not available for fall 2002, the school provided an electronic version instead.

In summary, Christel House Academy consistently fell below the state's target for attendance each of the last three years. It neared its target enrollment the last two years, a notable improvement since 2003. It retained less than half of its first class of students, though fall to fall retention rates have improved the last two years. In order to meet this standard, the school will need to maintain its recent enrollment success, improve its ability to keep students coming to class, and continue to improve its ability to re-enroll students year-to-year.

2.3. Is the school's Board active and competent in its oversight?	
Does not meet standard	The school appears to lack clear, consistent, and competent stewardship. The Board lacks the number of members specified in the by-laws; it is not well-balanced in member expertise; there has been consistently high turnover on the Board unrelated to the term limits stipulated in the Board's by-laws; roles and responsibilities of the Board are not clear; it often fails to achieve a quorum.
Approaching standard	Board membership is not complete; there has been some unanticipated turnover on the Board unrelated to the term limits stipulated in the Board's by-laws; it is reasonably well-balanced in member expertise; roles and responsibilities on the Board are reasonably clear; it is difficult to get a quorum; Board subcommittees are somewhat active; the Board is developing its ability to provide clear, consistent and competent stewardship.
Meets standard	The Board's membership collectively contributes a broad skill set and fair representation of the community; Board members are knowledgeable about the school; roles and responsibilities of the Board are clearly delineated; Board meetings reflect thoughtful discussion and progress in the consideration of issues; overall, the Board provides consistent and competent stewardship of the school.
Exceeds standard	The Board meets the standard for this sub-question AND: displays exceptional expertise and stewardship, as evidenced by significant Board actions to enhance the school over time.

Meets Standard. The Board at Christel House Academy is active and competent in its oversight. The Board has had stable membership since the school was established in 2002. The current Board consists of ten members who are appointed. Seven of these individuals – five of whom are also founding members – have served the school since 2002. As reported by the school's superintendent, all Board meetings in 2005-06 met quorum.

By design, Christel House Academy Board members possess a diverse range of professional expertise. The purpose of this model, as stated by the superintendent, is for the Board to be able to provide the school a range of guidance, experience and resources: "To be able to see the whole picture." Individuals bring experiences such as social work, behavior psychology, law and familiarity with Christel House International.

Through interviews with the Board and school leadership and a review of the school's academic performance over the previous three years, the FYCR site visit team determined that the Board is knowledgeable about the school's needs and has provided Christel House Academy with competent stewardship. At quarterly meetings, the Board is updated on many aspects of the school, including general operations, student academic achievement and other business-related information.

Email is used between meetings to keep the Board informed of school activities and to conduct some business operations, such as the approval of vouchers. A focus group conducted with the Board indicated that they define and measure success through; (1) Assessment results; (2) Financial performance; (3) Evaluations of classroom instruction and practices; (4) Site visit reports; and, (5) Applicant and enrollment statistics. Christel House Academy has shown increases in academic performance since the school's baseline year that range within the top three percent of Indiana schools. Board-based decisions in matters such as the acquisition of a new Education Management Organization and the maintenance of the stable and strong leadership of the school's superintendent (despite multiple turnovers in the principal position) are examples that indicate competent stewardship by the Board to Christel House Academy.

Evidence indicates that the Christel House Academy Board has significant expertise and stewardship. There has been significant turnover in the principal position – a position integral to the leadership of a school community – across the school's current charter term (see sub-question 2.5. for further discussion). The Board had not yet filled this position at the time of the site visit, but now has a principal in place for 2006-07. Accordingly, the FYCR site visit team found that the Board has met, but not exceeded, the standard.

2.4. Is there a high level of parent satisfaction with the school?	
Does not meet standard	Less than 70% of parents surveyed indicate that they are satisfied overall with the school.
Approaching standard	More than 70% but less than 80% of parents surveyed indicate that they are satisfied overall with the school.
Meets standard	More than 80% but less than 90% of parents surveyed indicate that they are satisfied overall with the school.
Exceeds standard	At least 90% of parents surveyed indicate that they are satisfied overall with the school.

Meets Standard. Averaged across the last two years, 84% of parents surveyed indicated that they are satisfied overall with Christel House Academy. In spring 2004, the Center of Excellence in Leadership of Learning (CELL) at the University of Indianapolis administered an anonymous survey to all parents and guardians of students enrolled at the school. Of the parent surveys received, 80% indicated overall satisfaction with the school. That percentage rose to 87% in spring 2005.

2.5. Is the school administration strong in its academic and organizational leadership?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas with no evidence of a credible plan to address them: a) the leadership has insufficient academic and/or business expertise; b) turnover in leadership has been high and/or damaging to the school; c) roles and responsibilities among leaders and between leaders and the Board are generally unclear; d) the school's leadership does not appear to actively engage in a process of continuous improvement; it has made few mid-course corrections in response to problems.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas with no evidence of a credible plan to address it: a) the leadership has insufficient academic and/or business expertise; b) turnover in leadership has been high and/or damaging to the school; c) roles and responsibilities among leaders and between leaders and the Board are generally unclear; d) the school's leadership does not appear to actively engage in a process of continuous improvement; it has made few mid-course corrections in response to problems.
Meets standard	The school's leadership a) has sufficient academic and/or business expertise; b) has been sufficiently stable over time; c) has clearly defined roles and responsibilities among leaders and between leaders and the Board; d) actively engages in a process of continuous improvement which has led to some mid-course corrections.
Exceeds standard	The leadership displays exceptional academic and business expertise. Leadership turnover has been manageable and appropriate. Roles and responsibilities among leaders and between leaders and the Board are clear. The leadership has established exemplary processes to engage in continuous improvement which have led to significant enhancements to the school over time.

Meets Standard. The administration at Christel House Academy is strong in its academic and business expertise. The roles and responsibilities of the Board, superintendent and other school leaders are clearly defined. Board members indicated that Christel House International and the Board are the primary organizational decision makers, and that school leadership is responsible for the implementation and evaluation of policies and practices. The Christel House Academy Board serves as the governing body

and “sounding board” for the school. As described by Board members in a focus group, it is the Board’s role to make key policy decisions, oversee personnel issues and exercise fiscal responsibility. The superintendent’s role is to ensure the effective and efficient day-to-day operations at the school, making certain that policies and procedures established by the Board are upheld in a “fair and equitable manner” and to “evaluate at what point Board involvement is needed.” Leadership responsibilities are also assumed by the Compliance Manager and two teaching staff members, or “leaders in training,” who assume leadership at the school when the superintendent is off site.

The superintendent’s strong commitment to academic success is widely recognized and respected by the school community. Focus groups of Christel House Academy parents and staff applauded the effectiveness of the school’s superintendent. Parents indicated that the superintendent “runs a tight ship,” but they see a “great team effort” at the school. Another parent stated that in order to be effective, the school’s leader “needs to be able to instill respect; and she [the superintendent] does that.” Christel House Academy faculty said the following in support of the school’s leadership:

- “She [the superintendent] is demanding, but respectful. She keeps students on track.”
- “Staff responds well [to the superintendent]. She respects us.”
- “You do it the way you’re supposed to, or you pay the consequences.”

Christel House Academy has experienced significant turnover in the principal position over the past three years, which has caused parents and staff to report some short-term frustration. It has not, however, had a long-term effect on the school or on student academic performance. The Board and the superintendent both provided similar explanations for the departure of each principal, each of whom was unable to uphold the high standards and/or the philosophy desired for a Christel House Academy leader. The continued vacancy of the principal position is a direct reflection of the Board’s unwillingness to compromise this standard, which is also recognized by the school’s community. As stated by one Board member, “Finding really skilled and talented administrators is very difficult.” The parent focus group indicated, “They are looking for a certain caliber person.” One staff member stated, “I am not sure they’ll ever find someone who meets their expectation.”

During principal vacancies, the superintendent, while also maintaining responsibilities of Director of Global Programs for Christel House International, has served in the capacity of principal. Although the absence of a principal presents a critical gap in the Christel House Academy administration, the constant presence of the superintendent has provided the necessary stability for the school. Even though corporate obligations pull the superintendent off site with some frequency, staff does not report feeling the void of a leader. One faculty member indicated, “Leadership has always been there for us. We have never felt unsupported or without a leader.”

Most importantly, ongoing improvement efforts are evident at Christel House Academy. Student performance has increased dramatically over the past three years. The school has a “working draft” of a school improvement plan, which incorporates the Mayor’s Office Accountability Plan, the Edison Student Achievement Plan and the requirements of Title I. Beyond legal and compliance obligations, this document reflects the priority goals of the school.

While there has not been a leadership void due to the efforts of the superintendent, the lack of stability in the principal position across the school’s current charter term is an area for attention. Hiring an individual

into this position should be a priority. However, even in the absence of a principal, the administration at Christel House Academy has maintained strong organizational and academic leadership, as well as a respectful environment. The school is not only committed to improvement, but has shown significant increases in student performance to meet the standard in this area.

2.6. Is the school meeting its school-specific organizational and management performance goals?	
Does not meet standard	School has clearly not met its school-specific organizational goal.
Approaching standard	School is making good progress toward meeting its school-specific organizational goal.
Meets standard	School has clearly met its school-specific organizational goal.
Exceeds standard	School has clearly exceeded its school-specific organizational goal.

Not applicable. Christel House Academy did not have school-specific organizational and management performance goals that were evaluated for the fourth year review.

Core Question 3: Is the school meeting its operations and access obligations?

3.1. Has the school satisfactorily completed all of its organizational and governance obligations?	
Does not meet standard	School presents significant concerns in two or more of its organizational and governance obligations as specified in the Compliance and Governance Handbook, with no evidence of a credible plan to address them: a) maintenance of adequate "compliance and governance binder" containing all required documents; b) completion of criminal background checks on all Board members; c) transparency of meetings and decision-making in accordance with open meetings obligations; d) maintenance of adequate Board minutes.
Approaching standard	School presents significant concerns in one of its organizational and governance obligations as specified in the Compliance and Governance Handbook, with no evidence of a credible plan to address it: a) maintenance of adequate "compliance and governance binder" containing all required documents; b) completion of criminal background checks on all Board members; c) transparency of meetings and decision-making in accordance with open meetings obligations; d) maintenance of adequate Board minutes
Meets standard	School has substantially completed all of its organizational and governance obligations as specified in the Compliance and Governance Handbook, including: a) maintenance of adequate "compliance and governance binder" containing all required documents; b) completion of criminal background checks on all Board members; c) transparency of meetings and decision-making in accordance with open meetings obligations; d) maintenance of adequate Board minutes. Any concerns are minor and the school presents a credible plan to address them.

Meets Standard. With only a few exceptions, the school adequately maintained its compliance binder, although the school did occasionally cancel monthly compliance meetings. The school documents in a timely manner that background checks are conducted for all board members. The board complies with public access and open door meeting laws by posting notices of board meetings. Minutes are properly kept and provide adequate detail as to board actions and discussions; indeed, the school appropriately responded to a note in the 2004 Accountability Report by providing better detail in board minutes in 2005-06.

3.2. Is the school's physical plant safe and conducive to learning?	
Does not meet standard	The facility requires <u>much</u> improvement in order to provide a safe environment that is conducive to learning. Significant health and safety code requirements have not been met AND/OR the school <u>lacks</u> many conditions such as the following: a design well-suited to meet the curricular and social needs of its students, faculty, and community members; a size appropriate for the enrollment and student-teacher ratios in each class; adequate maintenance and security; well-maintained equipment and furniture that match the educational needs of the students; and accessibility to all students.
Approaching standard	Significant health and safety code requirements are being met, but the facility needs <u>some</u> improvement in order to provide a safe environment that is conducive to learning. It <u>partially</u> – but not fully – provides conditions such as the following: a design well-suited to meet the curricular and social needs of its students, faculty, and community members; a size appropriate for the enrollment and student-teacher ratios in each class; good maintenance and security; well-maintained equipment and furniture that match the educational needs of the students; and accessibility to all students.
Meets standard	Significant health and safety code requirements are being met AND the facility generally provides a safe environment that is conducive to learning, based on conditions such as: a design well-suited to meet the curricular and social needs of its students, faculty, and community members; a size appropriate for the enrollment and student-teacher ratios in each class; good maintenance and security; well-maintained equipment and furniture that match the educational needs of the students; and accessibility to all students.

Meets Standard. The Christel House Academy facility meets all health and safety code requirements, and provides a safe environment conducive to learning. The facility's design, size, maintenance, security, equipment and furniture are all adequate to meet the school's needs. The school also finds ways to continually improve the facility, such as a recent remodeling of the cafeteria, and the development of an outdoor track.

3.3. Has the school established and implemented a fair and appropriate pupil enrollment process?	
Does not meet standard	The school's enrollment process does not comply with applicable law AND/OR the school exhibits one or both of the following deficiencies a) a substantial number of documented parent complaints suggest that it is not being implemented fairly or appropriately; b) the school has not engaged in outreach to students throughout the community.
Approaching standard	The school's enrollment process complies with applicable law but exhibits one or both the following deficiencies: a) a substantial number of documented parent complaints suggest that it is not being implemented fairly or appropriately; b) the school has not engaged in outreach to students throughout the community.
Meets standard	The school's enrollment process complies with applicable law; there are minimal documented parent complaints suggesting that it is not being implemented fairly or appropriately; AND the school has engaged in outreach to students throughout the community.

Meets Standard. Christel House Academy's admissions and enrollment practices and procedures meet the requirements of Indiana's charter school law. The Mayor's Office has received no complaints from parents regarding the school's enrollment practices, and the school conducts outreach to parents throughout the community.

The Mayor's Office annually receives copies of Christel House Academy's enrollment policies and marketing plans. In spring 2006, a researcher at CELL interviewed the Principal of the school about the school's enrollment and lottery practices and a researcher from Vanderbilt University attended the school's admissions lottery. The policies and CELL and Vanderbilt's observations show that Christel House Academy conducts a fair and appropriate enrollment process. The school advertises openings through the school's website, advertisements in local neighborhood and Spanish-language newspapers, and through flyers left at local community centers, day care centers, and churches.

Each year, Christel House Academy has held an admissions lottery as the number of applications received exceeded the number of open seats at the school. The lotteries were open to the public and all applicants were invited to attend.

3.4. Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to special-needs students?	
Does not meet standard	The school is <u>not</u> fulfilling its legal obligations regarding proper maintenance of special-needs students' files, and requires substantial improvement in order to achieve compliance such as the following: individualized education plans are up-to-date, student evaluations or re-evaluations have occurred within the appropriate timeframe, files contain the relevant required information, such as, file log sheet, parent consent form, documentation of case conference notification to parents and other conference participants and signatures of attendees at case conferences. A school does not meet the standard if any individual education plans have not been updated within the appropriate timeframe.
Approaching standard	The school is <u>not yet completely</u> fulfilling all of its legal obligations proper maintenance of special-needs students' files, and requires <i>some</i> (but not considerable) improvement to fully achieve conditions such as the following: individualized education plans are up-to-date, student evaluations or re-evaluations have occurred within the appropriate timeframe, files contain the relevant required information, such as, file log sheet, parent consent form, documentation of case conference notification to parents and other conference participants and signatures of attendees at case conferences.
Meets standard	The school is fulfilling its legal obligations regarding special-needs students, as indicated by conditions such as the following: individualized education plans are up-to-date, student evaluations or re-evaluations have occurred within the appropriate timeframe, files contain the relevant required information, such as, file log sheet, parent consent form, documentation of case conference notification to parents and other conference participants and signatures of attendees at case conferences.

Approaching Standard. In order to evaluate this question, an outside team of experts trained by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) conducted a **file review** in September 2006 of the school's special education files. The team's focus was to determine whether the files contained all required components. For example, the team determined if the files contained required documents (e.g. log sheet, parent consent form), documentation of case conference notification to parents and other conference participants, signatures of attendees at case conferences, and the up-to-date Individualized Education Plan (IEP), as well as whether the IEP included all necessary information, such as, measurable annual goals, a statement of how the parent will be informed of the student's progress and the due date of the student's re-evaluation.

The team did not interview parents or evaluate the school's provision of special education services beyond the information included in the special education students' files.

Christel House Academy has an overall effective system for reviewing and ensuring compliance with special education regulations and requirements, but the school is not completely fulfilling all of its legal obligations in each student's file, particularly with case conference notifications and providing proper notice of all case conferences. For those files that have been transferred to the new online format, called ICAN, all files were in complete compliance. The special education coordinator seemed knowledgeable about special education compliance requirements as well as the latest changes. The coordinator could benefit from professional development in writing measurable goals for students' IEPs.

The majority of special education files at Christel House Academy were found to be up-to-date, with re-evaluations having been completed within the required time periods. However, the school had difficulty providing information related to the case conference parent notifications. Most files were missing the notification documents, and at times indicated the school did not provide the required reasonable notice to parents. Some files were missing parent signatures on relevant forms. The documentation in the IEPs was also found to be poorly designed, as it was difficult to find compliance information.

The content of the IEPs could also benefit from improvement, particularly regarding appropriate accommodations for classroom learning and for students with deficiencies in mathematics. The school could also benefit from adding more information on student goals, particularly how goals will be measured.

The school should continue to move files to the new ICAN online format. The files that already have been transferred to ICAN were all in full compliance.

The special education coordinator appeared knowledgeable of special education requirements and demonstrated adequate knowledge of current changes to the requirements, including the ICAN system. The coordinator could benefit from professional development on writing measurable goals, which would improve the content of the students' IEPs.

In summary, Christel House Academy has an effective system in place for reviewing and maintaining its special education files, particularly as it continues to successfully transfer files to the online ICAN system. At present time, however, some files were found to not be in full compliance with all legal requirements. Therefore, the school is approaching the standard for proper maintenance of special education students' files.

3.5. Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related To access and services to English as a Second Language (ESL) students?	
Does not meet standard	The school is <u>not</u> fulfilling its legal obligations regarding ESL students, and requires substantial improvement in order to achieve conditions such as the following: appropriate staff have a clear understanding of current legislation, research and effective practices relating to the provision of ESL services; relationships with students, parents, and external providers that are well-managed and comply with law and regulation.
Approaching standard	The school is <u>not yet completely</u> fulfilling all of its legal obligations regarding ESL students, and requires <i>some</i> (but not considerable) improvement to fully achieve conditions such as the following: appropriate staff have a clear understanding of current legislation, research and effective practices relating to the provision of ESL services; relationships with students, parents, and external providers that are well-managed and comply with law and regulation.
Meets standard	The school is fulfilling its legal obligations regarding ESL students, as indicated by conditions such as the following: appropriate staff have a clear understanding of current legislation, research and effective practices relating to the provision of ESL services; relationships with students, parents, and external providers that are well-managed and comply with law and regulation.

Approaching Standard. Christel House Academy is generally fulfilling its legal obligations regarding English as a Second Language (ESL) students, but must ensure that its ESL staff is appropriately licensed. In its first two years of operations, a bilingual teacher at Christel House Academy offered pull-out ESL instruction to the handful of ESL students enrolled in the school. Since the fall of 2004-05, when the ESL student population grew to more than 40 students, the school has employed a full-time, dedicated ESL teacher. Three teachers served in this position over these two school years. However, the current teacher did not have the appropriate teaching license in the 2005-06 school year, although she is eligible for an emergency permit based on her enrollment in a certification program, and she received an emergency permit for the 2006-07 school year.

In all other areas, it appears that the school is meeting state and federal ESL requirements, although the IDOE has not yet conducted a formal ESL program review. The school conducts a Home Language Survey for students upon their enrollment and administers the required state language assessment test to determine student needs. The school's strategy is to immerse its ESL students into mainstream classes. ESL students spend anywhere from 35 to 450 minutes per week in pull-out instruction with the ESL teacher, depending on their grade and level of English fluency. The school should ensure that the limited amount of ESL instructional time for some students is sufficient, although it does meet current state requirements.

The school will fulfill its legal obligations to serve ESL students by maintaining an appropriate license for the current teacher and any future ESL teachers hired by the school.

Core Question 4: Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?

4.1. Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum does not align with the state standards; b) the school does not conduct systematic reviews of its curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance; c) the school does not regularly review scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing; d) the sequence of topics across grade levels and content areas does not focus on core (prioritized) learning objectives; e) the staff lacks understanding and/or consensus as to how the curriculum documents and related program materials are used to effectively deliver instruction; f) there is a lack of programs and materials available to deliver the curriculum effectively.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum does not align with the state standards; b) the school does not conduct systematic reviews of its curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance; c) the school does not regularly review scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing; d) the sequence of topics across grade levels and content areas does not focus on core (prioritized) learning objectives; e) the staff lacks understanding and/or consensus as to how the curriculum documents and related program materials are used to effectively deliver instruction; f) there is a lack of programs and materials available to deliver the curriculum effectively.
Meets standard	The school: a) curriculum aligns with the state standards; b) conducts systematic reviews of its curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance; c) the school regularly reviews scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing; d) has a sequence of topics across grade levels and content areas that is prioritized and focuses on the core learning objectives; e) the staff understands and uniformly uses curriculum documents and related program materials to effectively deliver instruction; f) programs and materials are available to deliver the curriculum effectively.

Meets Standard. The Indiana state academic standards and instructional tools provided by Edison Schools made up the curriculum at Christel House Academy, and teachers used the standards provided by the state, which are organized by content area and grade level, to determine what students needed to know and be able to do. To implement instruction, the school used the following programs provided by Edison: the *Open Court* reading series, *Everyday Math*, and scope and sequence documents to teach both science and social studies. The school also implemented the *Open Court* supplemental series to support struggling learners. The Wilson Reading System was used for some special education students. In addition, the school used Orton-Gillingham for phonics instruction and Step-Up Writing for writing.

The school used a wide range of materials to guide and support instruction. The 20 observations the FYCR site visit team conducted indicated that textbooks and supplemental resources were available to effectively deliver the curriculum in 100% of classrooms. Wall postings (e.g., word walls, number lines, maps) in most classrooms provided additional learning resources for students across content areas.

Teachers' understanding of the curriculum was evident. Teachers reported that, when planning instruction, they referenced the Indiana state academic standards handbooks provided by the state. When asked during focus groups, "How do you know what to teach?" Christel House Academy teachers consistently responded, the "Indiana standards" and "Edison [programs]." One teacher stated, "Indiana gives you the standards. Edison gives you the tools."

Christel House Academy utilized a curriculum with documents aligned with the Indiana state academic standards. Teachers had a uniform understanding of how to use these documents, as well as many other resources, to deliver instruction. Edison provided curriculum binders with a sequence of lesson topics by

grade level aligned with the standards. As stated by the school's superintendent, Edison reports "a 95 percent correlation" between curriculum documents and the Indiana state academic standards, which meets the standard for a high quality curriculum.

As Christel House Academy looks to improve in this area, a systematic, school-wide review of the curriculum might be beneficial. Some student achievement gaps have been identified at the classroom level through assessments and teacher observations. The school has conducted "data digs," which have been shared with all staff, to identify patterns and trends in student performance. School leadership and teachers report that they have identified gaps in some areas of the curriculum and that they are making adjustments at the classroom level. The superintendent reports future plans to complete curriculum mapping, which would be a good next step for the school. This process would ensure that gaps in the curriculum are addressed across classrooms and grade levels from year to year.

4.2. Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school's mission?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum is not implemented in the majority of classrooms according to its design; b) as delivered, instruction is not focused on core learning objectives; c) the pace of instruction/lessons and content delivery lacks the appropriate rigor and challenge; d) instructional activities lack variety and/or limited use of differentiated strategies to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities and learning needs; e) staff do not receive feedback on instructional practices.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) the curriculum is not implemented in the majority of classrooms according to its design; b) as delivered, instruction is not focused on core learning objectives; c) the pace of instruction/lessons and content delivery lacks the appropriate rigor and challenge; d) instructional activities lack variety and/or limited use of differentiated strategies to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities and learning needs; e) staff do not receive feedback on instructional practices.
Meets standard	The school exhibits the following characteristics: a) the curriculum is implemented in the majority of classrooms according to its design; b) as delivered, instruction is focused on core learning objectives; c) the pace of instruction/lessons and content delivery possesses the appropriate rigor and challenge; d) instructional activities possess variety and/or use of differentiated strategies to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities and learning needs; e) supplies sufficient feedback to staff on instructional practices.

Meets Standard. As indicated in response to sub-question 4.1, the Indiana state academic standards and Edison's instructional programs guide classroom practice. Observations by the FYCR site visit team noted the standards posted outside the door of each classroom, which stated the content areas to be addressed during the week. Classroom observations indicated lesson delivery was consistent with the posted content standard and possessed a clear purpose. Student learning objectives, however, were posted in only 10 percent (2/20) of the classrooms observed. During eight observations in which the observer was present at the lesson's beginning, the student learning objective was not stated or explained. Without an explanation of the objective, learning outcomes and expectations are not clearly established for students.

Varied types of instruction are in use across Christel House Academy classrooms. The FYCR site visit team conducted 20 classroom visits across grade levels and subject areas for approximately 30 minutes each. In 85 percent (17/20) of the classrooms, the site visit team observed the implementation of at least two of the following modes of instruction: teacher-led, student-led, small group and/or independent work. In several classrooms, all four modes of instruction were observed within the 30-minute block. This is

exemplary teaching practice, since varied types of instruction offer students a range of opportunities to learn content and skills. A detailed breakdown of instructional modes occurring across all 20 classrooms observed, with examples, includes:

- *Teacher-led instruction:* 85% of classes (17/20). Examples included lectures to introduce a topic and content delivery to the whole group via the overhead.
- *Student-led instruction:* 20% of classes (4/20). Examples included students delivering a written and oral explanation to the class, and calling on the next student to give a response.
- *Small Groups:* 65% of classes (13/20). Examples included varied center-based activities and pair and share.
- *Independent Work:* 65% of classes (13/20). Examples included silent reading and worksheets.

The pace and rigor of instruction varied across Christel House Academy classrooms. The FYCR site visit team noted one defining feature of classrooms judged to be more rigorous: teachers more frequently and fluidly used higher-order questioning techniques. For example, where teachers asked, “Can you explain what is different about the way you did it [solved the problem]?” and, “Why do you think that’s an example of [the concept]?” The use of Bloom’s Taxonomy – six levels of questioning – which is designed to encourage teachers to utilize questions that require more complex student response, is a current initiative at the school. During 20 observations, the FYCR site visit team saw use of higher-order questions in 50 percent (10/20) of classrooms. Instruction in these classrooms was judged to be more rigorous.

Christel House Academy has several systems in place that provide teachers sufficient feedback on instruction. The superintendent reported, and the staff agreed, she was “in classrooms everyday.” On most occasions, staff was given oral feedback, typically on initiatives that were priorities. Informal observation forms were also available to record brief, written comments. New Christel House Academy staff members are assigned mentors and (at the request of school leaders) struggling teachers are assigned buddies, both of whom provide instructional support and feedback through modeling and coaching. The organization of the school into “Houses” – multi-grade-level teams – provides another mechanism for feedback on instruction and classroom practice at daily team meetings. In addition, the formal evaluation process used at Christel House Academy provides staff summative information on their performance (see sub-question 4.5).

The implementation of a standards-based curriculum that is presented in multiple ways and includes a focus on use of higher-order questions, meets the standard for sound teaching practices. To continue to improve instruction at the school, Christel House Academy should focus future efforts on the following: (1) Continue to focus efforts on increasing the use of higher-order questions in all classrooms, as there are teachers at the school who are masterful at this skill and could be used to model this practice; and (2) place an emphasis on stating and explaining lesson objectives to ensure that students understand the learning outcomes they are expected to achieve.

4.3. For secondary students, does the school provide sufficient guidance on and support preparation for post-secondary options?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) the school's academic program lacks challenging coursework (e.g., Advanced Placement courses, internships, independent study) to prepare students for rigorous post-secondary opportunities; b) lack of high expectations to motivate and prepare students for post-secondary academic opportunities; c) insufficient material resources and personnel guidance available to inform students of post-secondary options; d) limited opportunities for extracurricular engagement and activities (e.g., athletics, academic clubs, vocational) to increase post-secondary options; e) the school does not meet Indiana Core 40 graduation standard requirements.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) the school's academic program lacks challenging coursework (e.g., Advanced Placement courses, internships, independent study) to prepare students for rigorous post-secondary opportunities; b) lack of high expectations to motivate and prepare students for post-secondary academic opportunities; c) insufficient material resources and personnel guidance available to inform students of post-secondary options; d) limited opportunities for extracurricular engagement and activities (e.g., athletics, academic clubs, vocational) to increase post-secondary options; e) the school does not meet Indiana Core 40 graduation standard requirements.
Meets standard	The school: a) has challenging coursework (e.g., Advanced Placement courses, internships, independent study) to prepare students for rigorous post-secondary opportunities; b) has high expectations to motivate and prepare students for post-secondary academic opportunities; c) has sufficient material resources and personnel guidance available to inform students of post-secondary options; d) presents opportunities for extracurricular engagement and activities (e.g., athletics, academic clubs, vocational) to increase post-secondary options; e) meets or exceeds Indiana Core 40 graduation standard requirements.

Not Applicable. This sub-question is not applicable to Christel House Academy because the school does not serve secondary students.

4.4. Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) standardized and/or classroom assessments are not accurate or useful measures of established learning standards/objectives; b) assessment results are not received by classroom teachers in a timely or useful manner to influence instructional decisions; c) assessments lack sufficient variety to guide instruction for a wide range of student learning abilities; d) there is limited frequency or use of assessments to inform instructional decisions effectively; e) assessment results are not used to guide instruction or make adjustments to curriculum.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) standardized and/or classroom assessments are not accurate or useful measures of established learning standards/objectives; b) assessment results are not received by classroom teachers in a timely or useful manner to influence instructional decisions; c) assessments lack sufficient variety to guide instruction for a wide range of student learning abilities; d) there is limited frequency or use of assessments to inform instructional decisions effectively; e) assessment results are not used to guide instruction or make adjustments to curriculum.
Meets standard	The school: a) standardized and/or classroom assessments are accurate and useful measures of established learning standards/objectives; b) assessment results are received by classroom teachers in a timely and useful manner to influence instructional decisions; c) assessments have sufficient variety to guide instruction for a wide range of student learning abilities; d) there is sufficient frequency or use of assessments to inform instructional decisions effectively; e) assessment results are used to guide instruction or make adjustments to curriculum.

Meets Standard. Christel House Academy effectively uses learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction. A variety of standardized tests and formative assessments, which provide the school with an abundance of information on student performance, are administered on a frequent basis. Assessments are used to guide and make adjustments to instruction.

Throughout the school year and across grade levels, the school administers a wide range of assessments:

- Grades 2 – 7 Once/year Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress Plus (ISTEP+)
- Grades 2 – 7 3 times/year Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)
- Grades K-3 Once/year Terra Nova
- Grades 2 – 6 5 times/year Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)
- Grades 2 – 7 11 times/year Writing prompts
- Grades K-3 3 times/year Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy (DIBELS)
- Grades 2 – 7 Monthly Edison Benchmarks

In addition, the school administers a range of diagnostic assessments as needed, and to evaluate all new, incoming students. The range of assessments administered at the school provides CHA with frequent and extensive information on student performance. As reported by teachers and evidenced in document reviews, however, some assessments have greater impact on instruction than others.

The Edison Benchmarks were the primary assessment used to guide and make adjustments to instruction. Interviews and focus groups with school leader and teachers also indicated that the student performance results on the Edison Benchmarks were used to determine when remediation was needed. For example, some teachers conduct mini-lessons to review content that presented difficulty for students. One group of teachers stated, “They [the Benchmarks] tell us what we need to re-teach.” Another group of teachers

indicated that student performance on the Edison Benchmarks assists them in forming small groups for instruction. In a focus group, third and fourth grade students shared bar graphs that showed their performance on the Benchmarks, which included the individual level they needed to achieve to meet their goal. Parents also expressed knowledge of the Edison Benchmarks.

A school binder containing the results of the Edison Benchmarks across grade levels was reviewed by the FYCR site visit team. Beyond individual student scores, the binder included an informal analysis of results conducted by each teacher. Teachers compiled summary reports that identified the strand and skill in which students showed weakness, including what students needed to do to improve and how the skill would be assessed, following each administration of the Edison Benchmarks.

In Kindergarten and first grade, the DIBELS was administered three times through the year. Short fluency measures were used regularly to monitor student achievement. Teachers reported the DIBELS was used to group students by ability and identify students who need targeted intervention.

In summary, Christel House Academy effectively used learning standards and assessments to measure student performance and make adjustments to instruction. The school had a wide range of assessments, providing both timely and meaningful information for students and teachers. Some of the assessments administered at the school served similar purposes (e.g., the TerraNova and the NWEA MAP are both norm-referenced tests) and some assessments appear to have less impact on teaching and learning. It may benefit the school to determine which assessments provide the most useful information and focus efforts on the data they provided, as opposed to using data from all the assessments currently given.

4.5. Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) hiring processes are not organized to support the success of new staff members; b) inefficient or insufficient deployment of faculty and staff limits instructional time and capacity; c) faculty and staff are not certified/trained in areas to which they are assigned; d) professional development (PD) does not relate to demonstrated needs for instructional improvement; e) PD is not determined through analyses of student attainment and improvement; f) the teacher evaluation plan is not explicit and regularly implemented with a clear process and criteria.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) hiring processes are not organized to support the success of new staff members; b) inefficient or insufficient deployment of faculty and staff limits instructional time and capacity; c) faculty and staff are not certified/trained in areas to which they are assigned; d) professional development (PD) does not relate to demonstrated needs for instructional improvement; e) PD is not determined through analyses of student attainment and improvement; f) the teacher evaluation plan is not explicit and regularly implemented with a clear process and criteria.
Meets standard	The school exhibits the following characteristics: a) hiring processes are organized and used to support the success of new staff members; b) the school deploys sufficient number of faculty and staff to maximize instructional time and capacity; c) faculty and staff are certified/trained in areas to which they are assigned; d) professional development (PD) is related to demonstrated needs for instructional improvement; e) PD opportunities are determined through analyses of student attainment and improvement; f) the teacher evaluation plan is explicit and regularly implemented with a clear process and criteria.

Meets Standard. Christel House Academy deployed staff effectively and had an adequate human resource system. The school utilized an extended school day and an extended school year to maximize instructional time and increase student learning opportunities. Deployment of staff considers instruction

and related planning, as well as the needs of all Christel House Academy students. There was a wide range of professional development opportunities available to address both teaching and learning. Teacher evaluation procedures were consistently implemented and based on clear criteria.

The structure of the school day at Christel House Academy contained regular opportunities for staff to meet with other teachers. The school is arranged into Houses – or vertical teams – that consist of teachers and support staff from varied grade levels. Teachers have two free periods every day, one of which is used for daily House meetings. As reported by the superintendent, the topic of House meetings is based on a school-wide schedule that dictates the topic of discussion each day (i.e., Monday – Student achievement; Tuesday – Family and Student Support Team (FASST); Wednesday – Reading; Thursday – “House business;” and Friday – Title I). Teachers school-wide confirmed the occurrence of daily team meetings, as well as the topics. Teachers reported that the second free period is used for preparation work related to classroom instruction or to meet with same-grade-level teachers. The vertical House structure at the school provides teachers the opportunity to work within smaller learning communities and also allows for cross-grade-level dialogue. Teachers also reported ongoing communications with staff at the same grade level to share lesson plans, which ensures consistency of content delivery and adherence to the Indiana state academic standards.

Each House has a lead teacher who also serves on the school's leadership team. These individuals act as the communication link between staff and the school's administration. A focus group with Christel House Academy lead teachers indicated that, as a result of this system, teachers can rely on constant communication at least once a week. As stated by one staff member, it also ensures that “every staff member has a voice.” Special education teachers, paraprofessionals and tutors are also represented on House teams, consistent with the grade levels and students they serve. Special education students who require additional instruction and modifications beyond what is provided in the regular classroom are served primarily through a pull-out model, as documented on the students' Individualized Education Plan. To ensure that the school meets the needs of struggling learners, intervention tutoring based on assessment results and teacher recommendation is available for students. Most intervention tutoring is provided in short 20-minute blocks, via a pull-out model within the school.

Christel House Academy provides a wide range of and extensive professional development opportunities that are determined both by school leaders and staff needs. The school's Professional Staff Development Plan is driven by a set of six instructional practice standards. Its purpose is two-fold: (1) to guide the development and implementation of the professional development calendar; and (2) to ensure proper training of new staff. As reported by the superintendent, the professional development calendar is driven by leaders' analysis of instructional needs at the school and the requirements of Edison. Edison provided annual trainings on its instructional programs that were used at the school, as well as curriculum and achievement advisors who were available to offer on-site support throughout the school year. Edison also provided an additional week-long training for new staff. Additionally, the school has an internal mentoring program for all new staff to provide ongoing training and support.

Other professional development and support was offered at Christel House Academy as a result of staff input on training needs. For the 2005-06 school year, staff expressed further training was needed on high-risk learners. Through consultative services, teachers received support and training from the IDOE's Division of Exceptional Learners and a virtual special education co-op. A behavior psychologist worked weekly with staff at the upper grade levels to develop strategies to better address the needs of high-risk

adolescents. In focus groups conducted during the FYCR site visit, staff uniformly agreed that professional development opportunities were sufficient and met their training needs.

A clear structure for teacher evaluation exists at Christel House Academy. The school uses a rubric-based summative evaluation process to assess and evaluate teacher performance. The process begins with a self-assessment by each staff member and a pre-observation conference, which results in a set of goals determined by both the leadership team and staff. Teachers received summative feedback from the superintendent on progress toward these goals and other pre-determined areas of instructional performance at scheduled times during the school year. The end-of-year evaluation is based on the same summative performance rubric and also makes recommendations for next year. The superintendent reported that recommendations might include different grade level placement for the following year or, in a few instances, dismissal of staff. Staff also receives merit pay, based on their performance each school year. The amount teachers receive is based on a pre-established, tiered set of criteria.

In summary, Christel House Academy has a structure in place that makes efficient use of staff and, further, that offers extensive time for collaboration on instructional practice, as well as student learning. There is a wide range of professional development opportunities that are based on the requirements of the school's educational program provider and an analysis of training needs. A clear evaluation system that offers performance incentives and is also used to provide feedback to staff is evident. All Christel House Academy teaching staff members are licensed in the state of Indiana. These characteristics meet the standard for an adequate human resource system.

4.6. Is the school's mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>both</u> of the following areas: a) significant disagreements exist among stakeholders about the school's mission; b) there is a lack of widespread knowledge and commitment to the intentions of the school's mission.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) significant disagreements exist among stakeholders about the school's mission; b) there is a lack of widespread knowledge and commitment to the intentions of the school's mission.
Meets standard	The school: a) has a mission that is shared by all stakeholders; b) has stakeholders possessing widespread knowledge and commitment to the intentions of the school's mission.

Meets Standard. All stakeholders clearly understand the school's mission, which the school describes as follows:

The Academy will be recognized as a provider of outstanding education to an underserved population and will maintain high standards of academic rigor, efficiency and accountability. It will provide students with the academic proficiency necessary for higher education, equip them with the desire for lifelong learning, strengthen their civic, ethical and moral values, and prepare them to be self sufficient, contributing members of society.

To support the implementation of the school's mission, Christel House Academy focuses on four core values, or pillars: respect, responsibility, independence and integrity. Interviews and focus groups with the staff indicated school-wide awareness of the mission and pillars, and the prominent role they play in providing vision to the school's education program. Focus groups conducted with parents and students also cited the four pillars as core values at the school. When asked about the mission of the school, parents stated "For students to respect themselves as well as others," "To develop intelligence," and

“Become well-rounded, contributing members of the community.” Students indicated the mission of the school is to “follow the rules and the core values” and “accomplish our goals.”

The range of initiatives and activities at the school further evidence the school's commitment to its mission. The core values are posted at the school's entrance and reiterated each day during morning announcements. Throughout the school, numerous quotations are posted to motivate students to persist and persevere. The school reinforces its mission through initiatives such as the “spirit stick” and the “Triple A” programs, which recognize exemplary student performance in the areas of Attendance, Achievement and Attitude. In addition to the core subjects, the school offers courses to all students in art, music, physical education and Spanish as part of its education program. Christel House Academy also provides after-school activities and clubs for students to continue their learning experiences after school hours. There is clear evidence to indicate that the school meets the standard in this area.

4.7. Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas with no evidence of a credible plan to address them: a) The school does not have clearly stated rules that enforce positive behavior; b) the school's discipline approach does not possess high expectations for student behavior; c) interactions between faculty and students are disrespectful and/or unsupportive and there are non-existing or unclear processes for resolution of conflicts; d) interactions between faculty and administration are unprofessional and/or unproductive.
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas with no evidence of a credible plan to address it: a) The school does not have clearly stated rules that enforce positive behavior; b) the school's discipline approach does not possess high expectations for student behavior; c) interactions between faculty and students are disrespectful and/or unsupportive and there are non-existing or unclear processes for resolution of conflicts; d) interactions between faculty and administration are unprofessional and/or unproductive.
Meets standard	The school exhibits the following characteristics: a) the school has clearly stated rules that enforce positive behavior; b) the school's discipline approach possesses high expectations for student behavior; c) interactions between faculty and students are respectful and supportive and faculty and students are clear about processes for resolution of conflicts; d) interactions between faculty and administration are professional and constructive.

Meets Standard. The school climate at Christel House Academy is conducive to student and staff success. There are high expectations for student behavior, which are guided by the school's four core values. Each school year begins with an intensive two weeks of a Procedural Learning Camp (based on the *Responsive Classroom* model) that is designed to teach students school routines and the standards for behavior at the school. This includes, for example, morning meetings, dismissal, classroom practices (e.g., asking questions, sitting in a chair) and hallway behavior. The expectation is that students will adhere to these standards throughout the school year. As part of the discipline process, students are asked to reflect on any values they have disobeyed. During a classroom observation, one teacher asked, “What value are you going against?” The school also uses a guest policy, in which students who are having difficulty staying on task are asked to visit another classroom.

To complement the student discipline approach, Christel House Academy also offers rewards for positive student behavior. The guest policy is used not only for students who are having difficulty, but for those who have excelled. As reported by one teacher, this allows students to “share their successes” with other members of the school community. The school utilizes classroom contracts, signed by the superintendent, to reinforce school-wide goals (e.g., a specific attendance rate). Classrooms that fulfill their contracts

receive a reward, pre-determined by the students. In addition to previously-mentioned initiatives (spirit stick, Triple A award), students can receive the Christel House Academy Award of Excellence for behavior that exceeds expectations. Students receiving the award are recognized in the daily announcements and recognized on the school's Wall of Fame. Various quotations posted throughout the halls at the school also reinforce the expectations for student behavior. Each morning, students recite the Christel House Academy pledge, which reiterates the school's core values and students are reminded to "Make it a Christel clear day. The choice is yours."

Since the fall of 2005, Christel House Academy has had a full-time School Support Manager (SSM) on site to address the behavioral needs of students. The school offers group and individual counseling to more than 50 students, as well as conflict mediation. The SSM plays a critical role in Family and Student Support Teams (FASST), a model designed to provide different levels of intervention to students who are having academic and/or behavioral difficulty in school, often as a result of external factors. When interventions by teaching staff have not been effective, a FASST team is organized that also includes the student, parents and the SSM. Interventions developed by the FASST team are individualized and can be put into effect and terminated at any time, contingent upon student behavior. As reported by the superintendent and the SSM, parents can also request a FASST team intervention.

Efforts at Christel House Academy to minimize disciplinary problems and reinforce positive student behavior have been effective. As evidenced through classroom observations, students clearly understand the school's behavioral expectations. In 75% (15/20) of the classrooms observed, the FYCR site visit team noted posted behavior rules. Student engagement at the school is high. In 85% (17/20) of the classrooms observed, all students were engaged for at least 70% of the learning activity. In 55% (11/20) of classes, student engagement exceeded 90%. The FYCR site visit team noted more limited engagement at the upper grade levels. Staff and school leadership attribute this to a large number of new students at these grade levels this year.

Positive interactions between students, staff and leadership have been well documented in this report (see sub-questions 2.5 and 4.8). Active communications, a strong disciplinary approach that is understood by students and a system that rewards positive student behavior and achievements is part of the Christel House Academy culture. This meets the standard of a successful school climate.

4.8. Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?	
Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the following areas: a) there is a lack of active and ongoing communication between the school and parents; b) school communication is neither timely nor relevant to the parental concerns; c) student academic progress and achievement reports are not clearly reported and/or misunderstood; d) the school's communication methods are not well-designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of parents (e.g., not communicating in parents' native languages, communicating only in writing when many parents cannot read, holding meetings at inconvenient times for parents).
Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the following areas: a) there is a lack of active and ongoing communication between the school and parents; b) school communication is neither timely nor relevant to the parental concerns; c) student academic progress and achievement reports are not clearly reported and/or misunderstood; d) the school's communication methods are not well-designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of parents (e.g., not communicating in parents' native languages, communicating only in writing when many parents cannot read, holding meetings at inconvenient times for parents).
Meets standard	The school: a) has active and ongoing communication between the school and parents; b) utilizes communications that are both timely and relevant to the parental concerns; c) communicates student academic progress and achievement in reports that are understood by parents; d) the school's communication methods are designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of parents (e.g., communicating in parents' native languages, not communicating only in writing when many parents cannot read, holding meetings at convenient times for parents).

Meets Standard. Ongoing communications with students and parents at Christel House Academy are clear and helpful. Staff and parents report that ongoing, meaningful communications are part of the culture at Christel House Academy. Teachers report daily communications with at least half of parents – mostly during student drop-off and pick-up. Frequent phone calls and email communications with parents were also reported by most staff interviewed by the FYCR site visit team. This was corroborated by parents, who indicated responses are “immediate” and that “teachers are always available.” Another parent stated, “Communications are awesome.” Some teachers reported sending home daily class newsletters, folders with student information or postcards that report student achievements. School-wide initiatives are communicated to students through daily, morning announcements. The school sends out a weekly newsletter, the “Friday Flyer,” to update parents on school activities and upcoming programs. Information for parents is also available in the school's parent resource room. School leadership reported that some written information is translated into Spanish. Three full-time staff members are fluent in Spanish and are always available to translate written materials for parents. Bilingual staff is also used regularly as translators, when needed, for parent meetings.

There are systems in place at Christel House Academy to communicate student academic progress to parents. Parents report receiving Northwest Evaluation Association assessment reports, as well as student results on the Edison Benchmarks. Included with score reports is a letter that explains the scores, which parents report is “easy to understand.” Academic goals are also shared with students. During a focus group with the FYCR site visit team, students shared color-coded graphs they had made, which displayed their individual performance on the Edison Benchmarks, as well as the target they had to achieve to meet their goal. In addition to sharing assessment reports, the school holds parent-teacher-student conferences three times a year. Student Learning Contracts are discussed and report cards are distributed at conferences. Leadership and staff, school-wide, reported that 95% of parents attend conferences.

Communications provided to parents are clear, helpful and part of the Christel House Academy culture. As stated by one parent, "It feels like a family when you walk in here." Parents also commended the dedication of staff, indicating that they "go above and beyond." The communication network provided by Christel House Academy meets the standard.

APPENDIX A

FOURTH YEAR CHARTER REVIEW SITE VISIT TEAM

The Fourth Year Charter Review site visit to Christel House Academy was conducted on March 15-17, 2006 by a team of educators from SchoolWorks LLC.

Megan Tupa, Team Leader, Project Manager, SchoolWorks, LLC

Dr. Dennis McKnight, Team Member, Consultant, SchoolWorks, LLC

Ledyard McFadden, Team Coach, President, SchoolWorks, LLC